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RLY AS POSSIBLE: AS LATE AS NECESSARY ... 2

# THE LENINIST

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Central Organ of the  
Provisional Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of Great Britain

THE RELAUNCH of the Anti Nazi League by the Socialist Workers Party has brought both a lot of flak. As an example, the *Jewish Chronicle* of February 29 reports that "national and Jewish student leaders have vowed to 'smash' the Anti Nazi League on Britain's campuses because, they claim, it is a front for the anti-zionist Socialist Workers Party".

The ANL is barely more popular in other quarters. Much of it is a product of the British left's all too typical sectarianism. The Anti Racist Alliance, for instance, claims a monopoly on the anti-racist movement (on the basis of having black people in its leadership) and attacks the ANL for splitting the fight against fascism. ARA seems to be setting itself up as a policeman for the anti-racist movement, declaring who is kosher and who is not. On the Rolan Adams Family's Campaign march of February 22, ARA stewards spent their time weeding out politically suspect elements (ie, ANL and others) from the ARA contingent. I personally saw three white ARA stewards try to remove a young black man from their contingent. So much for its 'blacker-than-thou' legitimacy.

With such a narrow view, ARA cannot extend its hegemony over the rest of the left, let alone dig roots within the wider working class. Its approach is that of the Labourite, quango bureaucracy that excludes far more comfortably than it involves and leads. Good activists within it, especially black youth who are involved through local affiliated campaigns, should be aware that ARA is leading them the long, winding road to Kinnock's door. It wants to sanitise resistance, rather than unleash it.

What about the ANL, then? Potentially it could mobilise large numbers of people, as did its initial incarnation in the 1970s. Tens of thousands of pounds have already come in as a response to the launch. The idea of the ANL has captured the imagination of many working class youth. Many stickers, badges and posters have sprouted, and by no means all from the SWP. An organisation of the SWP's size underpinning the ANL should be able to pull in many others - if it genuinely fights to do so.

In *The Leninist* No114 we put forward a fighting programme for the ANL, and warned of the dangers of building it on the celebrity-orientated and sanitised politics of the 1970s version. Unfortunately, the ANL is beginning to look like it has all the old vices, plus one or two new ones acquired on the way.

Again, fascism is presented as something foreign, unrelated to British imperialism and racism. No coherent challenge is being made to fascism's breeding ground in ANL literature. Where runs with the British National Party and other racist scum have taken place, it has generally been on the initiative of the BNP, with the ANL's SWP leaders unwilling to take necessary measures to defend its own activists.

In addition, it appears that the SWP leadership has decided not to open up ANL work. As it sees the 1970s ANL, the problem was that democracy allowed it to get out of its control. We hear that this has been explicitly pointed out in the SWP's internal bulletins. This time round, then, the cards will be played much closer to the chest. ANL work is to be centred, not on independent and democratic ANL branches, but on SWP branches. The SWP wants to do mass work, but is afraid of the masses.

Yet the response to the relaunch of the ANL indicates that it has an orbit which can be drawn in to challenge and circumvent this bureaucratic dead hand. The conservatism of the SWP creates a vacuum within which a coherent political challenge to it can take form. Initiatives can be taken to draw support into organisation, on a clear revolutionary perspective.

The reluctance of the SWP leadership to effectively fight fascism opens up the necessity of taking this fight into the ANL, on an anti-racist, anti-capitalist and democratic programme, as we proposed. What we warned of is recurring. The necessity of the democratic action programme proposed in *The Leninist* No114 is therefore necessary now: "The politics of the ANL should be decided by the membership of the ANL, expressed through regular policy conferences composed of delegates of local branches of the organisation and by a recallable leadership - picked, accountable to and trusted by the rank and file".

For all the self aggrandisement of both the ARA and ANL leaders, we have to recognise that no anti-racist movement exists. But there is a groundswell of support that indicates that one can be built at this time. In particular, the ANL could mobilise this, if the SWP leadership's sectarian domination can be overcome by large scale active involvement, if equipped with the politics to assert itself. Such a movement is possible if it is given its own voice and drawn to anti-capitalist solutions through militant activity.

Deputy Editor

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## LETTERS Wrong...

In *The Leninist* No114 I argued against the role Ernie Roberts plays in the current issue of *Unemployed Organiser*. Of course my arguments were wrong. The UWC must be built into a broad based workers' - employed and unemployed - movement.

The UWC must put forward the demands which the unemployed need. For this to be successful we need to aim at the millions of workers in the labour movement, not just a few thousand in the revolutionary movement.

This said, I do feel that it must be made clear to our comrades what the UWC aims to achieve and how it will achieve them. The demonstration on February 29 must be built on the basis of our demands in *Unemployed Organiser*. We must realise that our class is not in the active revolutionary movement. We must address this problem.

PS. Comrade Fischer's comments ignore the substance of my previous letter. It is surely obvious that I was then arguing not against a single line saying Ernie Roberts would work for a Labour victory, but against the tone and content of *Unemployed Organiser*.  
Martin Knight  
Surrey

## Or right?

The issue raised by Martin Knight regarding the use of *Unemployed Organiser* by its Honorary President, Ernie Roberts, to advocate voting Labour, is not some thing to be lightly dismissed. It is an issue of defining the relationship of the Communist Party and its participation in mass organisations of the working class; it is and has, always been a problematic question of how far a Communist Party goes, in participating in an amorphous body and yet retaining its political identity, and asserting its leadership.

The alternatives of our attitude can be that we refrain from clearly stating our position and become opportunist, which Knight is justly afraid of, or we can become sectarian through imposing our political policy upon such an organisation, which comrade Knight appears to tend toward, as a reaction to what he considers is an opportunist act on our part.

The reply of comrade Fischer certainly does not clear up the point. He is correct when he states that the UWC is "neither a pro nor an anti-Labour Party campaign". However, this statement should be qualified: the UWC as a broad class body must include people of all political tendencies, the ideas of whom can and should be expressed in the paper, as a personal viewpoint, as Ernie Roberts did. We as communists should also clearly and consistently express our political ideas in the paper. Our role, as Leninists within the UWC, is to both express our ideas and fight to win the organisation to our ideas and not just the immediate programme, and thereby for its members to support and elect us as communist leaders, and eventually for them to join the party.

To allow pro-Labourites to express their ideas and fail to advocate our anti-Labour ideas through fear of antagonising them, is to insinuate support for Labourism.

I don't believe that *The Leninist* is consciously pursuing such a policy, but one can easily slip into bad habits; as such, I agree with comrade Martin that it was a mistake not to mention the CPGB and its view upon the Labour Party and a possible Labour government in the last issue of the *UO*. This could have been done in comrade Fischer's contribution as a personal viewpoint.

What concerns me most though, is that a responsible leader of the Leninist such as comrade Fischer should rubbish comrade Martin's viewpoint, which is a justifiable political comment, instead of giving a reasoned

political reply, with the view to educating readers and our own members on the tactics of communists working within a non-party working class body. Only on this basis can we debate with comrades, win members and build a strong and genuine Communist Party.  
Tom Cowan  
South London

## Scotland

I for one welcome the struggle for independence in Scotland. Its fulfillment would deal a severe blow to the so called 'United Kingdom' and hopefully speed up the demise of the ruling class' state in these islands.

The existence of the UK state dominated by the English ruling class has presided over the oppression of the Celtic nations of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, as well as the working class in all four countries.

The struggle of the Irish people to win independence from the domination of the UK state provides an immediate alliance with the 'native' working class in struggle against the same state. The same is true of the efforts of the Scottish nation to free itself from the cloak of 'the butcher's apron'.

Of course, should the Scottish people decide emphatically to take independence, the question will be posed whether the British state will confront the movement as they did with Ireland. Should this be the case, it is unlikely the leadership of the SNP and the various tartan Tories rushing to join the clans at present would have the bottle to see the struggle through. The struggle for national independence would be joined by the most revolutionary forces, ie, the Scottish proletariat, who would be unlikely to submit to visions of a bourgeois Scotland, and instead would inscribe the task of constructing a workers' republic on the banner of independence.

This process is entirely in alliance (objectively) with the English working class, and cannot in my view be seen as divisive.

David Douglass  
Hatfield Main Branch NUM delegate  
(in a personal capacity)

## Refreshed

After some years of reading communist publications, *The Leninist* and books from November Publications, come as a breath of fresh air.

I, as no doubt many other people, have become distressed to see the weakness that seeks to compromise communism's essential and basic ideals and values. It is therefore refreshing to see this is not the case with *The Leninist*.

One thing that has concerned me over the years is the astonishing situation regarding communist publications. I have asked time and time again, why all other political schools of thought can expound their thinking in clear, concise, intelligible language, whilst communist writers seem to have a language of their own that is almost alien to everybody else, including the people whose support we need. However, I have just been greeted with a shrug of the shoulder, excuses, and even, despite the evidence, a denial that this is so. I find this very worrying indeed - how is change to take place, and support gathered, if such a communication problem exists?

This is why I was so very pleased to read *Which Road?* by Jack Conrad. He sets down the goals and aims in very clear statements about which there is no ambiguity. How very refreshing! If only this was always the situation - and this does also show it can be done. I was reaching the stage where I really thought that discussion about anything pertaining to Communism required this strange format and style that could have only deterred many sympathisers

from pursuing interest in the subject. This is a critical element as education is part of the struggle. If Jack Conrad's book is an example of the literature that the Party intends producing, then a major problem has now been overcome.

I sincerely hope that *The Leninist* receives a wide circulation and helps to direct the long overdue, and urgently-needed change in this country.  
Nicolas Davis  
Sussex

## Testing times?

Workers Power (No151) has two very interesting articles, one called "Put Labour to the Test!" and the other, "Support Dave Nellist" in the general election. As correctly stated in "Put Labour to the Test!", the object of "winning votes is not the main purpose of the campaign" but rather that "communists use every opportunity provided by capitalist society to spread the anti-capitalist message".

If Workers Power hold this view honestly, then why do they support Nellist and other *Militant* candidates, who stand on a reformist platform, and yet do not support the candidates of the CPGB who stand in the election on a communist action programme? Instead they rubbish *The Leninist's* principled communist position, as "the antics of certain small sects" who will "reveal" their "utter isolation".

The obvious criterion for WP is *not* which candidates "spread the anti-capitalist message" but that Nellist and Co are, like themselves, supporters of reactionary Labourism, and consequently, in this present period, will obtain far more votes than the CPGB candidates. While in words quoting and approving of Lenin's revolutionary position, in practice they carry out the reactionary policies of Trotsky.

In the article "Put labour to the Test!", which advocates support for the Labour Party in the general elections, WP admits that "Some sections of workers and youth have seen the realities of Labour in local government" and "no longer have illusions that Labour in government would be in their interests". Labour Councils have issued 3,305,336 summonses against 1,458,216 for the Tories, and Labour's liability orders have been 2,518,236 against 1,011,012 for the Tories (*The Times* February 15).

In this field alone, there exists a great potential of opposition. Instead of tail-ending and posing Labour as a lesser evil to Toryism, communists should be providing an alternative leadership, galvanising this potential opposition to Labour and parliamentary politics, organising workers as a class, in industry and on the streets, against whoever wins the election.

Such a struggle cannot be conducted by the likes of WP and its fellow Trotskyist groups. As soon as workers' mass struggles reach a peak and intensity where they may threaten the existence of a Labour government, the Trotskyists will compromise the struggle, in order to keep Labour in office. According to the Trotskyist theory, Labour is both a lesser evil and must be maintained in government office as a necessary condition for it to be exposed as anti-working class.

Paul Conlon  
London

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For reasons of political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

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# Of bombs and ballot boxes

The IRA's bombing campaign in London has been accompanied by new Sinn Fein peace plans and establishment stirring about a split between the two

**T**HE PRESS is now speculating as to whether the coming election will be thrown haywire - at least in London - by the IRA's current campaign. While this is in the main because it makes good copy, the London bombs in the wake of Sinn Fein's ard sheis (conference) are undoubtedly having a considerable disruptive effect. The IRA has left no doubt about its ability to sustain its armed struggle and take it to the heart of imperialist Britain, in the wake of the death of four of its Volunteers in the recent Tyrone ambush.

These events have brought condemnation by the usual figures, from John Major to the *Morning Star*, from stiff upper lips proclaiming that such attacks on Britain's "democratic process" are futile, to limp leftists blaming the IRA for playing into the hands of British imperialism and creating "obstacles to generating solidarity from the people of Britain".

The Tories attack the Irish for their lack of respect for the 'democratic' process that has denied them a voice and the right to self determination for centuries: the 'official communists' blame them for their own chauvinist refusal to defend the right to Irish self determination, which means nothing if it does not mean the right to *fight* for that goal. Real communists do not qualify any solidarity out of existence. We unconditionally defend the right of the Irish people to take up arms. While we only give *conditional* support to the republicans' programme, we give *unconditional* support to their fight against our main enemy, British imperialism.

The bourgeoisie and opportunists in Britain and Ireland, on the other hand, are concerned with isolating, diffusing or crushing the armed struggle. While pro-republican demonstrations and other actions are ignored, the bourgeois media hypes up the pitifully small stunts of New Consensus, whose condemnations of violence are solely directed against the IRA, not against the source of that violence, British occupation. Likewise with the Peace Train campaign, whose sole achievement seems to have been to drag Sandy Shaw out of mothballs. Both New Consensus and the Peace Train are largely Workers Party initiatives. WP, though, now has problems of its own, with the defection of 7 out of 8 Dail TDs to form an openly social democratic party, supported by the majority of members, and renewed problems with the supposedly defunct Official IRA, once non-too affectionately known as MacGiolla's guerillas after the old WP leader. To cap it all, its president Prionas de Rossa has now resigned, taking his supporters out of the party. Will the last one to leave please turn out the lights?

The Irish and British establishments are aware that they are unlikely to be able to separate the republican movement from its secure base of support in the nationalist community in the Six Counties. Measures such as the censorship of Section 31 in the Twenty-six Counties and the broadcasting ban in the UK are directed at

stopping the rest of the population from hearing what the republican movement *really* has to say. It is part of a programme of wider criminalisation of republicans.

A dominant policy now seems to be to encourage splits within the republican movement itself. Programmes are being broadcast on 'the changing face of the IRA', etc, in which the British public is told that the IRA has always had its hawks and doves. Any conciliatory statement by Sinn Fein leaders is seized on, dissected and counterposed to the armed struggle.

Again, the *Morning Star* and its Communist Party of Britain have a pre-booked seat on the bandwagon. Out of the blue, CPB national organiser Nidge Tovey has an article printed encouraging Sinn Fein's involvement in talks (*Morning Star* February 19 1992). This one-time member of the Irish Republican Support Group in the old CPGB hedges his bets. But the *Star*'s editorial three days later puts it more explicitly: "The demand for Sinn Fein to be involved in talks would be more realisable if the violence were to be stopped or completely disowned".

Now, what this fast-sinking rag writes is hardly likely to have any influence in its own right. But it is worth while noting, as this so-called working class paper is reflecting a powerful strain of *ruling* class thinking. Some now see the prospect for using the carrot, not the stick, against the republican movement. Unlike the CPB, and other 'socialists' such as Militant, we recognise that this is no move towards a peaceful resolution of a senselessly violent situation, but an attempt to behold the revolutionary movement.

Recent statements by Sinn Fein suggest that this is not a totally one-sided flirtation. Sinn Fein is putting forward ideas of either an EC or UN solution to the Irish war, themselves both imperialist dominated clubs. The idea is a rather forlorn hope that partition can be consigned into irrelevancy by the development of the single European market.

Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, has also moved away from direct association with the IRA's armed struggle, as illustrated in a recent interview in *The Irish Times*: "Personally, two or three or four years ago, I would have seen it necessary to state publicly that yes, there was a right of the IRA to engage in armed struggle, and perhaps even that armed struggle was a necessary ingredient in the struggle. I don't feel the need to do that now. In fact, I think my role now ... is one of increasingly and persistently saying, there's a need to end all acts of violence".

Sinn Fein has not condemned the armed struggle. Neither is it proposing a cease fire on the basis of the status quo. But the direction is towards accommodation. Whether Sinn Fein goes the whole hog, and what the results will be, cannot be predicted. But it does show the inadequacies of the republican movement's strategy.

Unlike other organisations on the left in Britain, we have always defended the revolutionary content of the republican movement's programme

and actions. But this programme is not *consistently* revolutionary, nor of a working class character. While heroic, the republican movement has never had a clear strategy. Since the 1981 hunger strikes it has clung tightly onto ballot box and armalite. Yet, instead of being viewed as compatible tactics within a wider strategy, they have been balanced uneasily, almost as ends within themselves. The struggle, while not in retreat, is at an impasse. A current of opinion seems to be growing that the armed struggle is acting as a limiting factor on wider electoral success, especially within the Twenty-six Counties. It would be surprising if there was not a degree of war weariness after over two decades of sacrifice by republicans.

But the armed struggle is a response to the revolutionary situation in the Six Counties. It became the main conduit for the nationalist masses' resistance to British domination after Bloody Sunday 1972, and has remained so. Within the Six Counties it is a product of the exposure of Britain's colonial 'democratic' elections. The inability of the republican movement to develop and broaden this revolutionary resistance should not lead us to conclude that it is a mistake, still less the problem.

Partition is not the be all and end all of the problem: rather it is a particular manifestation of imperialist domination. For leading republicans such as Adams and Martin McGuinness to make cessation of the armed struggle conditional on an end to partition in itself, especially given their illusions in the UN and EC, is to miss the essence of the matter: that partition is a form of imperialist domination. The exchange of British domination of the Six Counties for EC domination over 32 is only possible to the extent that Britain submerges its interests completely within the imperialist EC club. This done, in itself it will not resolve the contradictions that gave rise to the revolutionary situation in the north of Ireland: it may even sharpen and generalise them throughout Ireland.

Swapping one form of domination for another, even if possible, is not worth one drop of sweat, let alone the blood of all those who have died for freedom over the last 23 years. For imperialism, imperialist domination is not negotiable, even if it may seem so to some republicans.

Ireland needs a party that opposes imperialism in all its forms, from a consistently working class position. While giving our full support to the fight of republicans against British imperialism, we say Ireland needs a *Communist* Party.

For workers in Britain, though, it should be recognised that the accommodation of republicanism is in part a response to its isolation - not just within Ireland, but from any effective solidarity in Britain. We do not blame the actions of the IRA for the lack of that solidarity. Rather, we must look to build a movement that is based on the resolute defence of that struggle within the working class. We should not be mere spectators as the IRA hits British imperialism in its capital city but, marching separately, strike together.

Alan Merrik

"It has to be election year", was the first response of many teachers to this year's pay offer. Unusually, the figure at first seemed to match inflation and will be introduced in one go. But after years of educational upheaval it is unlikely that the Tories will gain many teachers' votes. The government's Review Body has recommended an increase of 7.5% from April 1 1992. This is well under what the unions wanted, and demonstrates how lacking in independence the Review Body is, keeping to the figure set by the government. It has added a mere £60 million to the sum already allocated by local authorities, many of which have said that they were not expecting such a large increase and will have to cut other areas to meet the salary bill. A further area of concern is the introduction of some type of teacher appraisal by the back door. The Body has suggested that extra pay will be available to some primary teachers, but linked to the overall performance of a school, which could be linked to its SATs results. The Review Body has also stated its intention to introduce performance related pay by 1993. The offer was accepted by the unions without any threat of industrial action. After years of the NUT failing to fight, pay is no longer a burning issue among teachers. Many are now too overwhelmed with the extra workload and see that as a more suitable area on which to campaign. *TC*

The national question in Scotland has hit the electoral bandwagon with a vengeance. Wales is getting a plug in too. But let us not forget the longest standing national liberation struggle in the history of the British Isles. In contrast to all the other parties, the communist election campaign cites Ireland as one of the central political issues facing the working class of Britain today. The commemoration of the 1916 Easter rising organised by Hands Off Ireland! is a celebration of the role our class played in that event, and of the leading role it must play if the goal of self determination for the Irish nation is to be achieved. All partisans of the working class, all partisans of the Irish national liberation struggle must demonstrate their anger at the continued intransigence of establishment politics on Britain's war in Ireland.

Take the issue to your trade unions and political organisations, pass motions in support of Irish national self determination and troops out now. Demand answers of prospective parliamentary candidates, do they reject *all* involvement of Britain in Ireland? And above all, build for the Easter commemoration march and rally. Assemble 1pm Saturday April 18 outside Willesden Green tube station, London NW2. Leaflets, posters, sponsorship forms and information is available from BCM Box 928 etc. Build now and march for Irish national liberation. *SR*

At Southwark Crown Court on March 2, four members of Anti Fascist Action, better known as the 'Brick Lane 4', and three members of the British National Party were bound over to keep the peace for 18 months. Some will say that this was a fine display of legal impartiality and even-handedness, the British judicial system vindicated. Of course, it was nothing of the sort. What it really meant was the criminalisation of AFA and its activities. The true facts of the case are that on October 14, while distributing leaflets in the Brick Lane area of Bethnal Green in Tower Hamlets, AFA members were attacked by fascists, with the direct connivance of the police, who had spent the morning intimidating individual AFA members and who just watched when the fascists waded in. When AFA members defended themselves, four of them were arrested and charged with 'affray', which carries a maximum sentence of three years. While we are glad the 'Brick Lane 4' were not imprisoned, the criminalisation of anti-fascists for defending themselves from fascist attack is hardly a cause for rejoicing. The sense of injustice is deepened by the fact the police officers who carried out the arrest belonged to the Bow Territorial Support Group, which has a long history of violence, particularly against Kurdish refugees. We must resolutely resist all attempts, from whatever quarter, to criminalise anti-fascist political activity. *EF*

## Missing ideas



The media is serving up non-stop pre-election hype, and already boredom is setting in. The staged studio debates between Tory and Labour spokespersons on the 'issues of the day' reveal just how similar these two parties have become. The glaring omission from these pillow fights is the politics of the CPGB. We expect the commentators will do their best to ignore our militant intervention in the general election, and barely mention our candidates. But no matter. We rely on our own resources to get our message across. *The Leninist* has a central role in the battle to reforge the Communist Party, and financial constraints only serve to hold us back. Each month we need £600 to cover production costs, but in February we only managed £442. Please dig deep for the March fund. Special thanks to comrades AS, MB and TM for their recent contributions. *Vernon Douglas, Fund Organiser*



# Not a feminist, but a workers' day



Working class women in the miners' great strike showed the way to fight

International Working Women's Day is about women's liberation. But not in the bourgeois feminist sense

**M**ARCH 8, International Working Women's Day is one of the most important dates in the communist calendar, not least because it shows that the women's world is divided into two, bourgeois and proletarian and that only through proletarian revolution will women find liberation.

The feminists who insist on women only events on International Women's Day forget its origins as International Working Women's Day. The first International Working Women's Day on March 8 1911 was initiated by the International Women's Socialist Organisation at the suggestion of Clara Zetkin, its secretary. She was a leading member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, and later played a prominent role in the formation of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and the Third (Communist) International.

Zetkin got the idea for the launch of International Working Women's Day from a demonstration on March 8 1908 by women machinists demanding improved working conditions and the right to vote.

This demonstration was also directed against the bourgeois women's suffrage movement because it did not favour working class votes.

Monstrous though it may seem to modern 'socialist' feminists, in resolving to make March 8 IWWD the IWSO resolved that "socialist women must not ally themselves with bourgeois feminists, but lead the battle side by side with the socialist men". Of course there were opportunist elements, not least from Britain, who considered the IWSO majority 'sectarian' in their attitude towards feminism. Fortunately they were rebutted.

Inevitably though, there are today 'socialist' feminists who claim there is no contradiction in praising Zetkin and feminism because, they say, the feminist movement has changed. This is untrue. Feminism still claims that men are the oppressors of women. And, in the last analysis, all forms of feminism want to see working class women cooperate with middle class women against working class men.

Zetkin fought tenaciously against the 'socialist feminists' of her day. Against them she declared that there is "no such thing as a women's movement". Bourgeois women will struggle for improved conditions from men of their own class but Zetkin argued working class women can only achieve their liberation "through the political rule of the working class."

In this stand she was joined by the Bolsheviks. They produced the first issue of *Rabotnitsa*, a paper for women, in time for the first celebration of International Working Women's Day in Russia in 1913. The debate around plans for this celebration are revealing.

The Mensheviks wanted women only demonstrations and cooperation with the feminists. This was vigorously combated by *Rabotnitsa*. The lead article was written by Nadezhda Krupskaya specifically on this issue. She attacked the Mensheviks for wanting to cooperate with "bourgeois women" who "always oppose themselves to men and demand their rights from men." For working class women the question is "quite different." They are united with working class men because of "their common

For these reasons the Bolsheviks insisted March 8 be celebrated by the entire working class. They wanted nothing to do with women only events advocated by the Mensheviks and now so beloved by feminists.

The Bolshevik line shook the world. On March 8 1917 (February 23 in the old Russian calendar) strikes by women celebrating International Working Women's Day acted as the catalyst for the February Revolution which toppled the Tsar and paved the way for the Great October Socialist Revolution.

The degeneration of the communist movement has eroded the effectiveness of working class mobilisation generally. Given its organisational disintegration and political accommodation with such ideologies as feminism, in the 1970s the latter took the initiative. Between 'official communism' and the feminists, the 'Working' component of IWWD was dropped.

The implosion of the feminist movement, from a mass force in the 1970s to small groupings today, has meant the effective killing off of any form of demonstration on March 8. The last London - and, by implication, national - demonstration was held in 1987. Hundreds of women and men from the revolutionary movement in Turkey mobilised, with a number of Iranian revolutionaries also present. We mobilised for the march. But the official organisers - the only other British contingent - numbered about half a dozen, trailing a patchwork banner with them.

The fact that 'official communism' is all but gone, and that the feminists have given up the ghost, should not lead us to walk away from IWWD. This is not just history, but a potential and necessary focus for a living struggle. So long as working class women are still forced to fight in the way that their sisters did at the start of the century, IWWD and the lessons of the battles around it, will have paramount relevance now.

The needs of the capitalist system dictate that working class women will fight, and demand a response from communists. Reclaiming and rebuilding IWWD around mass struggle of all our class for women's rights can and will be done.

## Fulltime workers, part time workforce

Both feminism and the bourgeoisie portray men as benefiting from the domestic labour of women. But the family unit has a restrictive and repressive hold on all its members, men, women and children. But it is women who are at the sharp end of this, and play a pivotal role in the family unit. They both reproduce its structures through their labour and therefore the means for this oppression to continue. They are tied to the home: reproducing the workforce, maintaining their men by maintaining the home with food, looking after dependants etc.

This relationship is formed outside of the wage relation in capitalist society. But it exists to enable that exploitative relation to continue. The separation of women's domestic labour from social labour in general arose with the development of capitalist society and is specific to this society in this form. Domestic labour is therefore labour that is performed gratis, for the benefit of the capitalist class, as it frees that class from the bulk of the expense of reproducing its own workforce.

This is why communists demand the socialisation of housework. This is not science fiction, but the necessary prerequisite for the liberation of women, freeing them from the ties of private labour which underpin women's status in this society. Fighting around the concrete implementation of this demand poses the needs of working class women, and our entire class, against the very essence of the capitalist system. Our freedom is entirely counterposed to its very existence.

## Capitalism's reserves

Women remain the reserve army of labour and can be drawn into the labour force more fully in periods of economic boom or in times of war, although this

Their work within production is dictated by their role outside it. This isolates women in the home, and even at work; a woman who succeeds at work is under more pressure to fail, and one who fails is automatically nominated as a shining example of what it is to be female in that job.

As the capitalist gyratory swings back to stagnation and recession, it is the women who lose their jobs as their position within the workforce is more tenuous, and are thrown back into part time work or the home.

It has been put forward that women's employment is not depressed as much as their male counterparts in recessionary conditions. But the actual type of employment that makes such a figure possible is kept hidden within the undifferentiated mass of the government's employment figures. In reality, it is only women's part time work that is increasing. Part timers are easier to exploit as they have less rights. Low wages, no sick pay and no creches are typical examples of part time work. Roughly two fifths of women in work are part timers, and women make up about 90% of the part time workforce. Those who have worked fulltime do not receive any of the benefits of full timers. This underlines the need to enshrine the rights of those who are not full time. Today's recession has meant that more women workers are becoming part timers, as both full timers are shunted into part time work, and many women who before were not part of the labour force are forced to take such work to maintain their families.

The fight against this form of oppression of women cannot be defeated by a women's movement. What is needed is a movement on a clear working class basis. Unlike the feminists, who believe that 'patriarchy' is to blame, Marxists understand that women's oppression is not borne of the rotten fruits of sexism, or of men. Domination of women is rooted in a necessary form of the domination of capital.

Campaigning for single issues, and not linking the struggle to its class roots, gives rise to the erroneous views feminists have of male chauvinism. The best example of this is the various campaigns for the censorship of pornography. Heterosexual male pornography is a product, but by no means a cause, of chauvinism. Sexist attitudes cannot be eradicated by removing *Playboy* from the shelves of your local WH Smith, whatever Labour's Clare Short may think. Sexism has material roots within capitalist society; it is not merely a body of ideas that can be isolated and eradicated. It is the product of an alienated society; the flip side of the coin to the censorious denial of sexuality epitomised by the 'moral majority', an arid oppressive bigotry which many feminists have adopted.

Feminism and Marxism cannot be twinned to produce the best for women - the basic postulate of many 'socialist' feminists. The works of Lenin, Kollontai and Zetkin certainly stated that feminism was a petty bourgeois ideology. Feminism is a separatist movement that can only see the effects, and not the causes of women's oppression. Attempts to merge Marxism and feminism in some kind of good old fashioned English compromise do not take us one step nearer understanding what the cause of women's oppression in society is, and what we do about it.

The liberation of women is in direct contrast to the interests of capitalism, not of men. What is necessary is a working women's movement which precisely adheres to the needs of working class women. Challenging the existing ideology and oppression can only be achieved by the working class as a whole, rising up and overthrowing the system that is at the root of these problems.

Feminism will not address the needs of all women. It has ascended to the cliquish world of academia. Others became embroiled in the Labour bureaucracy and local government quangos. And then let us not forget Seum, the Society for Cutting Up Men...

Rather than making some charitable gesture, according to the particular issue involving women, all the problems women face in society are related to the scrap-heap of capitalist misery. Tackling sensitive issues such as rape, cervical cancer and what the NHS doesn't do for women, toxic shock syndrome or abortion - take your pick - they are all the result of a society which cannot afford to look after half of its population because this would undermine its



ines, not just because she was raped, but because she lives in the Twenty-six Counties, where abortion is illegal. Although the appeal court relented, this was only done because of the mobilisations against the original court ruling. While the Twenty-six County state has become a specific focus for the fight for abortion rights, with 4,000 women travelling to Britain each year according to official figures, and real figures over 10,000, abortion rights are in general under attack. Over recent years, a number of Bills have been put forward in an attempt to further restrict those rights. The existing legislation, passed in 1967, is by no means an enshrinement of a women's right to choose. It is limited, both in terms of time and the fact that an abortion must be approved by two doctors. The question is, who determines a women's rights over her own body; the woman or the capitalist state? Scum like Spue and Life have a clear, reactionary answer. Working class women need a clear response. The actions of much of the left in supporting the 1967 act just fudge things. That is why communists demand the right to abortion: as early as possible, as late as necessary.

We live in a period where single parenthood is tolerated, but not accepted, and where getting contraception or an abortion is still taboo in British culture. And these are called 'advanced civilisations'. Internationally, in even less 'civilised' countries, women are subjected to the worst forms of humiliation; enslaved by Islamic reaction, or Mexican women who are forced in childbearing because abortion is illegal and the illegal option dangerous. These are backward countries with the ugliest face of capitalism.

But the completely reactionary nature of capitalism shows itself even in the most powerful imperialist nation, the United States. In Nevada women have been arrested for passing on Aids to their unborn children. In Utah, apparently, abortion has become a capital offence, in the interests of defending the "unborn child" against "murder". The black-list of female abuse the world over is endless and has shown that capitalism does not support and cannot afford women's rights. Our rights are not negotiable. Capitalism must go.

## Opportunity knocks?

Women's rights cannot be fought out or reasoned in parliament, not solved by reform because this society cannot afford women's rights.

The Tories' Opportunity 2000 and Labour's Ministry of Women will not advance women in the workplace. They are a reactionary gesture to middle class women in management positions. These measures are surely a pre-election placebo to the potential voter. Those who study the politics of Opportunity 2,000 will realize that it is only a voluntary initiative taken by Britain's top companies. The Tories know that if one company does it the rest will have to follow. In other words Opportunity 2,000 may insist that there will be more women in managerial positions over the next few years but the government itself will be doing nothing. The idea behind it is to increase women in the workforce, especially in the top jobs either by increasing their presence to a specific number or by a specific percentage.

On the other hand, Labour tells us that by setting up Ministry of Women that the voices of women will be raised and the issues tackled. Of course this is misleading rubbish. The Ministry of Women is not going to change anything for women in the workplace. Past legislation, such as the 1970 Equal Pay Act and various commissions drawn up by miscellaneous Labour governments have been put forward to head off working class struggle. The former, in particular, was created to demobilise a powerful strike movement, emanating from underpaid women workers at Fords; empty promises instead of real gains won through struggle. As the old joke goes, this is about as much use to women as a bike to a fish.

To allow women their equality in the workplace and in the home we must break the bourgeois state that ties them there. To end their exploitation and that of men, all workers must unite and forge the way for a communist future, which is when full liberation can only be achieved. As the liberation of women is bound up with the fight for revolution it is vital that women are involved in the struggle.

Communists base this struggle on what workers need not what the system can afford. We do not support feminism, but see the liberation of women as part of the liberation of all oppressed people. We do not blame men but capitalism, which is responsible for the backward attitudes towards lesbians and gays, disabled people and immigrants.

Those who call themselves communists must use International Working Women's Day in order to celebrate the militancy of the New York machinists and Clara Zetkin's work. It is not about empty gestures but commemorating the past in the only way that communists like Zetkin would support - in the revolutionary fight for an end to the society that oppresses us all. We are not interested in tokenism, but liberation through action.

Sally Taylor

# Grunwick Revisited



She should have been watching her back, against the trade union bureaucrats

A GREAT Russian revolutionary once made the point that once women have been brought into struggle, they can often exhibit more dedication, vigour and sheer guts than their male class brothers. This is because they are held down, repressed in the literal sense, more harshly than men. Once that latent energy is released, it can spring back with spectacular force.

This adage was well illustrated by the leading strikers of the Grunwick dispute in 1976-7.

In August 20 1976 a group of Asian migrant workers staged a protest walkout from Grunwick, a film processing firm in North West London. These workers, mostly women, were recent immigrants from Uganda, and spoke little English. Easy pickings for the likes of Grunwick's managing director George Ward, an Anglo-Indian who had made good use of this source of cheap, unorganised labour in the rapid expansion of his business.

The success of Grunwick under Ward was based on the super exploitation of these migrant workers. They had to work long hours with few breaks (even visits to the toilet were rationed to once an hour), with no holiday or sick leave entitlement. Compulsory overtime could be imposed at short notice and no arguments, thank you. Basic wage rates for these long hours in Dickensian conditions were a pathetic £25-£28 a week. With no union to defend them workers were liable to immediate sacking at the discretion of the management.

When the walkout of 137 workers developed into what was to become a legendary strike from August 1976, it was led by an Asian woman Jayaben Desai. This unprepossessing woman was to go on to lead one of the most bitterly intense disputes of the militant 1970s.

The strike started very low key and spluttered badly at the beginning. The strikers - all of whom were totally inexperienced in the field of industrial action and trade union organisation - were advised to join the small union, Apex. Their representative in this highly conservative union, Roy Grantham, earned his crust by appealing to the government for a court of inquiry into Grunwick, a request that was predictably refused by the Labour government.

Tom Jackson of the Union of Post Office Workers pledged the support of his union in response and issued an instruction to black Grunwick's mail, an instruction implemented 100% by the local post office workers in nearby Cricklewood.

Ward was staring defeat in the face he later admitted. However, with assistance from the extreme rightwing National Freedom Association, Ward won a victory in the courts and Apex faced the threat of legal action.

UPW withdrew its backing, pacified by the face saving 'promise' from Ward to cooperate with Acas, the industrial 'conciliation' body.

Acas reported in March 1977, recommending that Apex should be recognised. Ward, predictably, refused and announced his intention to challenge the report in the courts. As *Grunwick: Bravery and Betrayal* puts it, "the strike was well and truly bogged down in a legal morass" (p5).

Thus, ten months after the strike had begun the strikers seemed no nearer victory. In a bid to up the pressure on Grunwick the strike committee called on the TUC to support them in blacking all essential services. The TUC refused, arguing that they had a 'constitutional commitment' to provide essential services. Meanwhile, post office workers who had been blacking Grunwick mail were instructed by their union bosses to abandon their solidarity action.

Faced with a trade union bureaucracy that refused any real effective support, the workers took matters into their own hands. A mass picket was called for June 13 1977. On the first day 300 pickets turned up and the police came in hard. Eighty four were arrested and many were injured. It is interesting to note that in the account of the strike by Tom Durkin, then a CPGB member, no mention is made of the fact that it was a Labour government that sent the police in to break up the mass picket (*Grunwick: Bravery and Betrayal*). Interesting, but not surprising.

Solidarity action grew rapidly, with 3,000 on the picket line by the end of the first week of mass picketing. In response to this growing number of pickets the company began bussing in blacklegs, and the Met threw in the Special Patrol Group.

One of the most enduring images from this period is the photo taken of Scargill in a police van after his arrest on the Grunwick picket of June 23. But the real heroes of the solidarity action were the thousands of rank and file workers who rallied to the defence of the sacked workers.

Typical were the post office workers in nearby Cricklewood who defied their union and blacked the Grunwick mail. As a result they were locked out by the Post Office management.

The strikers had consistently pressed the TUC for action to cut off essential services to Grunwick, but were met each time with cool opposition. The TUC in effect washed its hands of the strike after the mass picketing began. It disapproved of the fact that, "there were certain elements seeking to turn it into a political confrontation" (Joe Rogaly, *Grunwick?*). Its commitment was not to the workers involved, but was to their statutory duty to the Labour government to provide vital services.

While the Grunwick strikers had a mass movement behind them at last, the initiative began to pass to others.

The Labour government was desperate for a resolution. It considered Grunwick to be politically embarrassing, but all its efforts at conciliation between Apex and Grunwick were thwarted by the company. So it announced the Scarman inquiry into

the dispute.

With the legal machinations proceeding, Apex attempted to run down the pickets. "Slowly but surely the TUC, Apex and UPW wore down the strikers and the postmen. The strikers called off a mass picket planned for August 8 and on July 29 the postal workers voted narrowly to return to work on July 29, Black Friday" (Tom Durkin, interview with Anne Murphy, February 17 1992).

Ironically, direct support for the strike had reached new levels a few weeks earlier with 20,000 demonstrating against the company.

From now on, the strike was staring defeat in the face. Bamboozled by the courts and fed on a diet of hot air from the trade union tops, the strikers' morale started to fray. Following a police attack on an 8,000 strong picket on November 7, which left 243 injured, the strikers, in desperation, organised a hunger strike outside Congress House in the days leading up to the November TUC congress to demand support. The TUC ignored the hunger strikers and did nothing more. Apex, however, did. It sent a letter stating "that any strikers participating in the hunger strike outside of Congress House or involved in the organisation of any further mass picketing would be suspended from office in the union and would lose four week's strike pay" (Tom Durkin, *Grunwick: Bravery and Betrayal*, p13).

The strike limped on for another 8 months, but without hope. Finally, on July 14 1977, the Strike committee officially announced the end of a dispute that had really been suffocated many months earlier.

Nevertheless, despite bureaucratic machinations and cowardliness, Grunwick represented an heroic episode in the history of the workers' movement in this country. The women of Grunwick - their ferocious militancy and their ability to learn - came as a shock to both the bourgeoisie and reformism in Britain.

In that sense, comrades like Tom Durkin are right when they say the strikers did not lose, that they "rose up like the proverbial phoenix from the ashes of non-unionism, appalling conditions of employment and crude exploitation" (*Ibid* p16). Their courage and self sacrifice did not let them down. Their leadership - both official and unofficial - sold them down the river. The women and men of Grunwick were lions ... led by donkeys.

Their struggle was a brilliant portent of the future. When our class equips itself with a leadership worthy of it, women will play a full and leading role in the struggle for socialist revolution.

Anne Murphy





# Women and the revolution, 1921

The formation of the CPGB and its early years: documents, resolutions and manifestos

Some of you may not read London's Evening Standard. Some of you are lucky. Never a paper to rally round the red banner, it sometimes plumbs the depths of silliness in its redbaiting. Such a time was on March 3. It seems that "ex-communist" David Aaronovitch, former National Union of Students president in the 1970s and son of Sam, one-time CPGB economy 'expert', is front runner for editor of Panorama. Aaronovitch, you may remember, was a typical rightwing hack, the sort which only the Euros could breed. Despite the fact that Kenneth Baker has threatened the BBC over this, and that the very prospect "evokes disgust" in Woodrow Wyatt - a fairly disgusting spectacle himself - the establishment could not wish for a safer man for the job. The best evidence they have against Aaronovitch is that he "once owned two cats named October and Revolution". Tut-tut. And what did he call the stuff they left in their litter? Evening Standard copy?

And so onto the would be incumbent in Number 10, the ginger pig. Not normally known for his brevity and wit, Neil Kinnock was recently asked by a journalist, with reference to the European Community, if he thought Britain needed another agricultural programme. "No", he replied. "Emmerdale's just fine". The only worrying thing is that he might just be serious...

One group whose prospects are not quite so good at getting into Number 10 are the Revolutionary Communist Party, which not so long ago was telling us that the Labour Party was dead, and that it could not win the next election. That one seems to have been quietly dropped. But what has been even more quietly raised is the RCP's intention to stand candidates in the election. Since adopting the coffee table 'Marxism' of its journal Living Marxism, its old weekly paper, The Next Step, has become a weakly four page photocopied newsletter, circulating mainly to RCP supporters. A few weeks ago, TNS announced the decision to stand. Yet two issues of Living Comfortably have passed us by, and still not a word about this in its nice glossy pages. A more reluctant campaign from this once dynamic band you could not imagine. What could be up? This squeaky clean crew couldn't be the victim of discontent in the ranks could it? Or could it? Serious students of left antics, watch this space.

**W**HEN the CPGB was formed in 1920 only one in eight of its members were women.

While this proportion reflected the level of involvement of women in the labour movement generally, it presented an obstacle to Party work among a strategically important and oppressed section of the working class.

It was 11 months before the first significant article on the communist approach to the women's question appeared in the Party paper. This situation was not unique to the Party in Britain. Within the Communist Party of Germany at this time - the Comintern's largest section outside the Soviet Union - there were objections that, despite repeated resolutions on developing work around women had been voted through at successive congresses, little had been done to implement them.

Nevertheless, the Communist International and its constituent parties carried forward and developed the best elements of the old Second International's work among women, and with it some of its finest female cadre: for example, in Russia, Alexandra Kollontai and Inessa Armand; in Germany, KPD founder and leading theorist Rosa Luxemburg, women's leader Clara Zetkin, and Party leader in the mid-1920s, Ruth Fischer.

Despite its late appearance and brevity, the article by Leonora Thomas reproduced below is well argued, and remarkably relevant for today.

## Women and Communism

IF A WOMAN, greatly daring, suggests to the male revolutionist that there is a woman's problem to be solved by revolution, she is met with one of two answers. The first and most common is that women are a damned nuisance. The second is that the women's problem is the same as the man's.

There is certainly much to be said for the first answer. The difficulties of the transition period of revolution would be less if there were no women; but as matters are it is worse than useless to funk the problem.

As to the second answer, only in so far as revolution is the only hope for women's emancipation is the problem the same as the man's. But just because the woman's position under capitalism is different from the man's, she has even more to gain than he has by the overthrow of that system.

Under capitalism women are, according to their class, either slaves or parasites. The agitation for the vote or the entry of women into industry and the professions has not altered women's position in the mass. The greater freedom and independence of a few middle-class women does not affect the problem; and it was no desire

for freedom that sent working class women into industry.

Observe the position of the latter. Economic circumstances forced the children of the workers into factories when they should have been at school, and economic circumstances keep the women in industry after marriage. Conditions are no better in those homes where both man and woman are working, because wages under our present system are based on the family standard. The effect of the entry of women into industry has been either to reduce men's wages, as in the cotton industry, or to drive them out, as in the teaching industry. Working for wages has done nothing, and can do nothing, towards women's emancipation except to put her in the position to join the ranks of the organised workers.

We do not get to grips with the problem until we realise that the greatest factor in a woman's life is her sex and that the fact that she is a potential mother dominates all else. It not only concerns the home and social relations, but has its reaction throughout industry, too. A woman's probable marriage and consequent departure from industry is an excuse for low wages and for blind alley occupations. Her occupation is marriage.

And what does marriage mean to the majority of working women? In the Daily Herald recently women gave time tables of their day's work. Their working day lasted in most cases from 6.30am to 10pm. The conditions of some are worse than others, but all are bad. Anyone with knowledge of mining villages knows the horrible round of unmitigated toil which is the lot of the miner's wife. Primitive housing conditions make matters worse, but

better houses would not alter the fact that the average married woman works too long and has little or no recreation.

What is even more dreadful is her lack of communal life. Many women spend week after week, year after year, with no other human intercourse than that of husband and children - a terrible isolation, conducive to the retention of ancient superstitions and the dwarfing of the race.

The work of motherhood and housekeeping is arduous and highly technical, involving as it does several other occupations, such as cooking, teaching and nursing. For this the working girl has no training. In other times girls were trained by their mothers, so that any natural inability was to some extent minimised.

It is customary to disguise the deep social injury of this lack of training under the false sentiment of "a mother knows by instinct". As well as a man knows by instinct how to be a doctor.

This, then, is a woman's position under capitalism. Before marriage she is a wage slave usually under worse conditions than a man; after marriage she is a slave to a bad housekeeping system and forced to do work for which she is untrained and in many cases temperamentally unfitted, and she is shut off from any communal life.

What will be her position after the revolution? How will the revolution solve the problem?

The need for greater production and saving of available material will probably force a communal housekeeping system even during the transition period. Women with the ability to do on a large scale what they did before on a small scale will quickly find their places. The others will be absorbed into

occupations for which they are fitted, and as time goes on the process of selection and training will alter the whole status of the women doing the work that was previously done in separate houses.

Those doing house cleaning will be organised in a house cleaners' guild, which will not be composed entirely of married women, but of all - men and women - who are engaged in any part of house cleaning. As members of the guild they will be entitled to vote for or be the delegates to, the workers' committee, and so take a part in the government of the commune.

The sensible and economic organisation of what is now classed under the head of housekeeping will not only abolish slave conditions but will also release an enormous volume of energy and ability to serve the community in other occupations.

How about the children? someone asks. A woman during her actual child-bearing period will be exempt from any work which would injure the health of herself or the child. When the time comes for the child to go to school the mother will resume her other occupation.

Under the capitalist system the children of the workers are taken from their mothers at four or five years to be educated by the state. The probability is that this time will be lessened as the tendency is towards Montessori methods, and nursery schools. This, of course, does not mean that the children will be separated from the mother; but for a certain period - four or five hours a day - the children will be with other children playing, and the mother will be working, perhaps in the nursery schools, perhaps at housework, perhaps as an architect.

So revolution will mean "the breaking up of the home", but not in the sense that the users of that phrase imply. All social customs are a reflex of the economic system, and under communism the possessive impulse which is largely responsible for our present social customs will be restricted.

These are the developments which I think are bound to occur, but we ought to consider them, talk of them and prepare for them. Men are not revolutionists because they accept certain principles, but because they see that those principles, applied to society would secure better conditions for them and their fellows. It is essential that women, whose interests are so largely confined to the home, should see that those principles have a direct reaction on the conditions in which they live their lives.

The Communist July 9 1921

In January 1922 the Party set up a Women's Department under Helen Crawford, who was also the 'women's representative' on the Party's political bureau. The first CPGB women's conference was held in May 1924.

Compiled by Doug Hulme



Rosa Luxemburg: working class fighter and revolutionary martyr



## REVIEWS

### Shifting Positions

Feminist Review Collective, *Feminist Review* No39, Winter 1991, *Shifting Territories: Feminism and Europe*, Routledge, pp213, £8.50

THIS JOURNAL shifts from left to right, from pro to anti, from socialist to capitalist, from good to bad and from the sublime to the ridiculous, let alone between the territories of Europe.

It is, however, a well meaning special issue of this three times a year feminist journal. Well meaning but reactionary, as the editorial collective confesses itself: "Immensely moved by the events of 1989 and uncertain of the meanings and potential of a socialist-feminist project in the 1990s" (p1). Questions such as: "How should we make sense of these major transformations? ... What part have women played in them and what are their implications for women?" (p1) are attempted in the collection of articles and essays that make up the majority of the journal. The answers are left hanging in the air as the conclusions to be drawn are not palatable enough to be anything but hinted at.

The first article by Irene Dolling sets the tone of complete confusion and lack of rigorous coherent argument that forms the only consistent trend throughout the journal. She lists a few of the "internationally recognised advantages and 'achievements' of socialism in the GDR" (p5); the comprehensive social welfare policy which enabled GDR women to be more economically independent than many of their western counterparts, etc. Yet she is torn between rejecting the old style state socialism and everything that went with it and acknowledging that these limited achievements are already the first casualties of the new market democracy.

A recurring theme within this collection of articles is acknowledging some of the achievements of the socialist bloc and then going on to condemn them. It is par for the course, in today's political climate, to be anti the 'patriarchal-paternalist' state, which apparently only had one function - to oppress women. They hail the 1989 collapse of the Soviet bloc as the start of a new era for the liberation of feminists within Europe, then skip over the poverty, starvation and military conflicts that have already started to result.

Even those who could not foresee these events cannot now deny them; they just find an alternative explanation. "The end of the Cold War was a heady moment for me" (p109) was the opening line of Mary Kaldor's article entitled 'After the Cold War' in which she claims some of the glory of the collapse of the Soviet bloc for the antipolitics of the feminists and peace movements. She is even brave enough to pose the question "did our efforts to end the Cold War provoke the backlash we are now experiencing in the Gulf or in the Soviet Union?" (p114), but not quite brave enough to answer it.

It cannot be claimed that the former socialist countries had a perfect record on women's emancipation. However, it is an indisputable truth that the move to a market economy will of necessity marginalise women once guaranteed the right to work to the role of a reserve army of labour, to be pushed into or drawn from the home whenever required by the exploitative capitalist's profit motive.

This will need to be accompanied by an ideological shift within these countries as recognised by Ruth Pearson: "Withdrawal of state support in terms of childcare and maternity leave is more likely to deconstruct the identity of women as workers and reproducers combined and to replace them with an ideology of reproduction reminiscent of Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s" (p93). Yet she goes on to write that "It is not possible to predict at the time

of writing what the outcome of these pressures will be..." (p95). This can only arise from an ostrich's approach to the real world from a woman who purports to have "written extensively on the impact of global economy on women's work" (p96).

Barbara Einhorn's article (pp32-33) touches upon how this reshaping of women's perspective is being moulded by the influence of the western media. She contrasts a popular GDR women's magazine's front page headline of "Emancipated Woman or Mother?" before Maxwell to "As Beautiful as Springtime" after. This valid point is lost within the diatribe of the rest of her article entitled 'Where have all the women gone?'

The dual burden of women within society is well documented by both feminist and socialist writers alike. There is however a new horror of the little known third burden. Western women who suffer from domestic slavery and tedious repetitive mind numbing production, spare a thought for your poor Eastern sisters who were forced to take a political stance for themselves.

In the words of Barbara Einhorn, they suffered in the form of "pressure on women to perform some public social or political role" (p20). How emancipation can ever be achieved without women taking an active role within society is, of course, left unanswered. Maybe she feels men should shoulder this responsibility for the whole of society or maybe no one at all should take up the cause of women's emancipation?

These writers are typical of petty bourgeois feminists (even those who claim to be socialist) in that they see the emancipation of women lying only in the formation of all-women organisations, no matter what the issue. They lack the theoretical consistency to see economic systems, bureaucratic structures and institutions as the oppressors within society, rather than individual men.

Women's emancipation cannot come through women struggling alone on issues marginalised by today's society. If women and men are to achieve full emancipation they have to reforge a new society together.

Jade Scott

### Stand firm

Grosser, Mason and Parmar, *Take a Firm Stand: the young woman's guide to self defence*, Virago Upstarts, pp91, £4.99

THIS CONCISE manual deals with both physical and non-physical ways of responding to intimidation and assault for young women. Writing as a communist and martial artist, in that order, rather than as a young woman, I think this is a useful and welcome publication. The techniques illustrated are both practical and simple, and the advice given on assertiveness - which often puts off a potential physical attack - generally sound.

But *Take a Firm Stand* has a number of shortcomings, of both an avoidable and unavoidable nature. In terms of the latter, it is impossible to present a complete combat system in such a short book, or for that matter, to teach what is essentially a dynamic system through pictures and text. But then, the book makes no pretence of doing this, emphasising practice. Mind you, some of the stuff in the 'Defending ourselves without using physical force' chapter are a little odd. For instance, it is hard to imagine a determined assailant being put off by "picking your nose, really thoroughly!" (p31). I winced as I read this: a sharp jab to the elbow of the offending digit is likely to impale your head on your finger.

There is little enough criticism to be made of the other pointers. On a broader level, I have reservations about the usefulness of purely women's self defence classes. Although mixed classes more often than not intimidate many women by being male domi-

nated - both numerically and in terms of attitude - women only classes present another problem: being faced with a six foot, 14 stone neanderthal on the street, after training with other women of a significantly lighter build, can make it rather difficult to adapt that training. Having said this, any self defence or martial arts class has some degree of artificiality.

The bourgeoisie itself proves that women can take an effective part in defence - or offence. Take a look at Britain's most accomplished street fighting gang; the police. If you have ever faced a charge by the riot squad, you will know there is precious little to choose between sexes here. Their advantage is that of skill, self confidence and, above all, organisation.

Returning to *Take a Firm Stand*; it is inadequate in dealing with the social roots of violence against women. It correctly states, "Most men are taught that females are inferior to males ... This means that when these men feel powerless, or angry, or frightened, they easily turn against women" (p5). While true, the authors make no attempt to explain why this should be so. Now, it may seem very unfair to criticise a book on self defence for not taking 'the correct line'. After all, would one criticise Funakoshi, one of the originators of modern karate, for not adopting an anti-imperialist position on Japanese expansion in his writings? But Verso, unlike Funakoshi, claims a radical outlook. The authors also try to look at violence socially, in being a problem for a particular section of society. By only taking this so far they individualise the problem, thereby individualising the solution.

Yet any solution must be one that is collective, that recognises that the degradation described in *Take a Firm Stand* is produced by a degrading and alienating society. And this system is, above all, a class system. Any answers must of necessity, then, be for our class, both women and men, against theirs. This is not to dismiss individual self defence, or propose another variety of that 'wait for the revolution, sister' crap. But if violence is a product of class society, and class struggle in one form or another is omnipresent within capitalist society, then those with a recognition of this can make a difference now.

The bourgeoisie has long noted that working class communities with a high level of struggle have a much lower crime level, whether this is in West Belfast or the mining communities during the 1984-5 great strike. In both these cases, with whatever limitations, women have organised to defend their own specific interests, and unite them with their own class brothers.

In terms of defence, the organised expression of this are the workers' defence corps - which, far from being some leftist pee-flexing ego trip, are thrown forward at high levels of class struggle. Such bodies resolve individual violence against women in both a negative and positive way. Negatively, they can prevent it: being an integral part of the community, they have a knowledge of that community that the police can never have. They are within the class they defend, not standing above it as a hostile power. In a positive sense, such workers' defence is part of the development of class consciousness, of the transformation of working class society from a collection of alienated individuals - a situation that is a breeding ground for destructive, senseless violence - into a collective, truly human community, through struggle.

Against the bourgeoisie's bodies of armed men and women, our class develops its own combat organisations in which women must play a leading role, and have done in the past. This is the guarantee of effective defence.

That fight does not exist in the distant future. Organised, effective defence is possible and necessary today. Those who do not take such measures seriously, in effect will always put revolution and women's liberation 'whenever', and not as a result of our struggles now.

Alan Merrik

## ACTION

### Communist Party

London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135.

Weekly discussion on current political developments. The first part of each seminar constitutes a comprehensive course throughout 1992 on Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism: March 15: Academic 'Marxism' (Part 2). Seminars 9-13 on Materialist Dialectics:

March 22: Universal connection of phenomena. March 29: Necessity and accident. April 5: Quantity and quality. April 12: Contradiction in nature and society. April 19: Continuity and development.

International Working Women's Day, Sunday March 8

CPGB meeting with speakers invited from Communist Party of Turkey, Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (Rahe Kargar), Communist Party of Cuba. Ring for details.

Communist Party general election campaign:

Glasgow Central (Tam Dean Burn). Rhondda (Mark Fischer). Bethnal Green and Stepney (Stan Kelsey). Brent East (Anne Murphy). As an April 9 election looms, the Communist Party's campaigning work in these four constituencies hots up. Offers of help please to 071-431 3135.

Ninth Party Offensive:

High on the agenda is of course, the question of finance. The Party has set itself the target of raising sufficient finances to print all our election material on our own presses. This requires an even more intensive period of fundraising within the Ninth Party Offensive. Fund organiser Nick Clarke writes: "We call on all readers to rush donations to this year's Offensive - the largest, most ambitious and challenging the Party has organised thus far." Donations/sponsorship forms can be ordered via Nick Clarke at BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

### Hands Off Ireland!

Saturday April 18: HO! march and rally to commemorate the 1916 Easter Rising and demand Troops out now! and Self determination for the Irish Nation! HO! and the Communist Party say that the IRA are right - we do need to force the issue of Ireland to the top of the political agenda, but not just in the forthcoming general election. Do your bit for the struggle for Irish national liberation all the year round. You can start by joining HO! and the Communist Party on the march on April 18. Assemble: 1pm Saturday April 18, Willesden Green tube, Walm Lane London NW2. March to rally at 3pm. Leaflets, sponsorship letters and posters available now. Has your organisation sponsored yet?

### Communism Lives!

A series of four books by Jack Conrad, a member of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee.

*Which Road?:* A Marxist analysis of the 'revolutionary reformist' programmes of 'official communism' and Militant, laying the basis for a new communist programme. (pbk, pp280, £6.95 plus 10% postage)

*From October to August:* An analysis of the social roots and dynamics of the Soviet counterrevolution. (pbk, pp200, £6.95 plus 10% postage)

*Class and Nation* (£5.95) and *Society of the Future* (£5.95) will follow later this year.

All four books for £22 postfree. Cheques to November Publications Ltd, BCM Box 928, London, WC1N 3XX.

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# To split or not to split

The 1992 general election is only weeks away. According to the opinion polls the Labour Party now has a serious chance at the next election of being the largest party at Westminster, after 13 years of continuous Tory rule

**T**HE FIVE year cycle of the bourgeois democratic process is almost complete and the election juggernaut has started to roll. Serious campaigning by the main bourgeois parties has been underway for several weeks. While they attempt to win the voters to their brand of capitalism, the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain has signalled its commitment to intervene in the general election, in a *revolutionary, communist* way.

As Marxist-Leninists we recognise that the development of human society is driven by the locomotive of the class struggle, not by parliamentary elections. We recognise that society can only move forward via socialism to communism when the decaying fetters of capitalism, under imperialism, are destroyed through revolution, not through the reform of bourgeois democracy and parliamentary procedures.

Our attitude to bourgeois elections is taken from the Bolsheviks and Lenin. Except in extreme circumstances it is obligatory for any organisation that calls itself 'communist' to take part and to stand candidates in a general election. Where the candidates stand, who they stand against etc, is a tactical question, which is dependant on various factors. We use elections on an agitational basis, to fight for communist ideas amongst the masses, to

have our MPs elected and to expose the duplicity of bourgeois democracy: "As long as the masses have illusions in the bourgeois parliament it is vital to use parliament. And in the event of communists finding themselves in the House of Commons ... we would use every parliamentary privilege and device to create a platform for the communist programme. Our MPs would in parliamentary terms be 'thugs', ie tribunes of the oppressed and advocates of violent revolution. Communist MPs would in this way turn parliament against parliament, use it as a platform to expose parliamentary democracy and help prepare the conditions for its overthrow" (Jack Conrad *Which Road?* p97).

Since we announced in mid 1991 our intention to stand candidates in the election, we have run up against the argument that by standing we are being sectarian and splitting the anti-Tory vote. This argument is articulated by reformist and revolutionaries alike. From the Communist Party of Britain, through Militant (in both its forms) to the Socialist Workers Party, whether using reformist, centrist or pseudo revolutionary rhetoric they all end up in the same cul-de-sac. They identify the Tories as the *main* problem. This is characterised by their slogans on demonstrations and through the headlines and contents of their publications.

We profoundly disagree with this.

The *main* problem for workers in Britain, and across the world, is not this or that bourgeois party, but *capitalism* itself. It is the crisis-ridden system of capitalism in its highest, moribund stage - imperialism - that is the source of the problem. The way to give a lasting solution to such problems is through socialist *revolution*, not through reforming capitalism. Consequently, for any communist organisation, this should colour any intervention in the bourgeois electoral system. The above mentioned organisations fail to understand Lenin's description that "the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, ... which acts to systematically dupe the workers" (VI Lenin CW Vol 31 p258). It actually *does* dupe a number of so-called revolutionary organisations whose raison d'être seems to be to act as foot soldiers and recruiting sergeants for the reformist, imperialist Labour Party. Their narrow anti-Tory perspective ensures they subordinate their politics and organisation to the thoroughly pro-capitalist Labour Party.

It is unforgivable for communist and revolutionary organisations to act in such a servile fashion. What is needed is an independent working class organisation that acts in the interests of the working class as a whole; that is prepared to offer a genuine alternative to capitalism in its various guises: the Tories, Labour, Liberal

Democrats or the Greens. Our main concern is not the electoral defeat of the Tories, or the election of a Labour government, but the reforging of a genuine Communist Party in Britain. How can any organisation that calls itself revolutionary or claims to act in the interests of the proletariat submerge and subordinate its theory and practice to an imperialist Labour Party that, when in government, has attacked workers as hard as any other explicitly anti-working class party. On this basis if we split the anti-Tory vote then *good*. If our standing a CPGB candidate in Brent East means Ken Livingstone is kept out of parliament then so be it. An extra Tory or Liberal MP will make no difference to the fight for socialism. Our real concern is not parliamentary politics, but what happens outside parliament, in the working class. If we have the power to split the Labour vote significantly, with a revolutionary alternative, then it shows that the confidence and combativity of the working class is on the rise and will be prepared to fight capitalism for its demands, whether it is run by Major or Kinnock.

To repeat, our main task is not to keep the Tories out. It is the fight against monopoly capital, against the state and *all* political parties that defend it. That is best served by reforging a genuine Communist Party in Britain. By standing candidates, putting forward a platform for working class defence and by our other interventions in the

general election we are signalling to the masses that there is an alternative to the bankruptcy of the Labour Party. The Provisional Central Committee will act as a beacon to win workers away from the constraints of bourgeois reformist politics and to unite them in a revolutionary proletarian movement to fight for what the working class needs. A defeat for Labour on election day will not be defeat for the working class. Our class will have to fight whoever wins. These battles can only be successful under the leadership of a Communist Party.

To enable us to carry out our election intervention as effectively, professionally and dynamically as possible then we need significant amounts of money. A target of £70,000 has been set, to be raised by the end of July. However with the election likely to be next month we need to raise the majority of it by then if we are to avoid cash crisis. At a special meeting in London on March 1 we took new pledges to be in by the end of the month. So far almost £18,000 has been pledged of which £8,000 has been received. While the individual targets set will mean considerable hard work and sacrifices by comrades if we are to meet our target we need *all* supporters, sympathisers and readers to take part and rush cheques and cash to us as soon as possible.

Vote CPGB!

Victory to the 9th Party Offensive!

Jim Cook

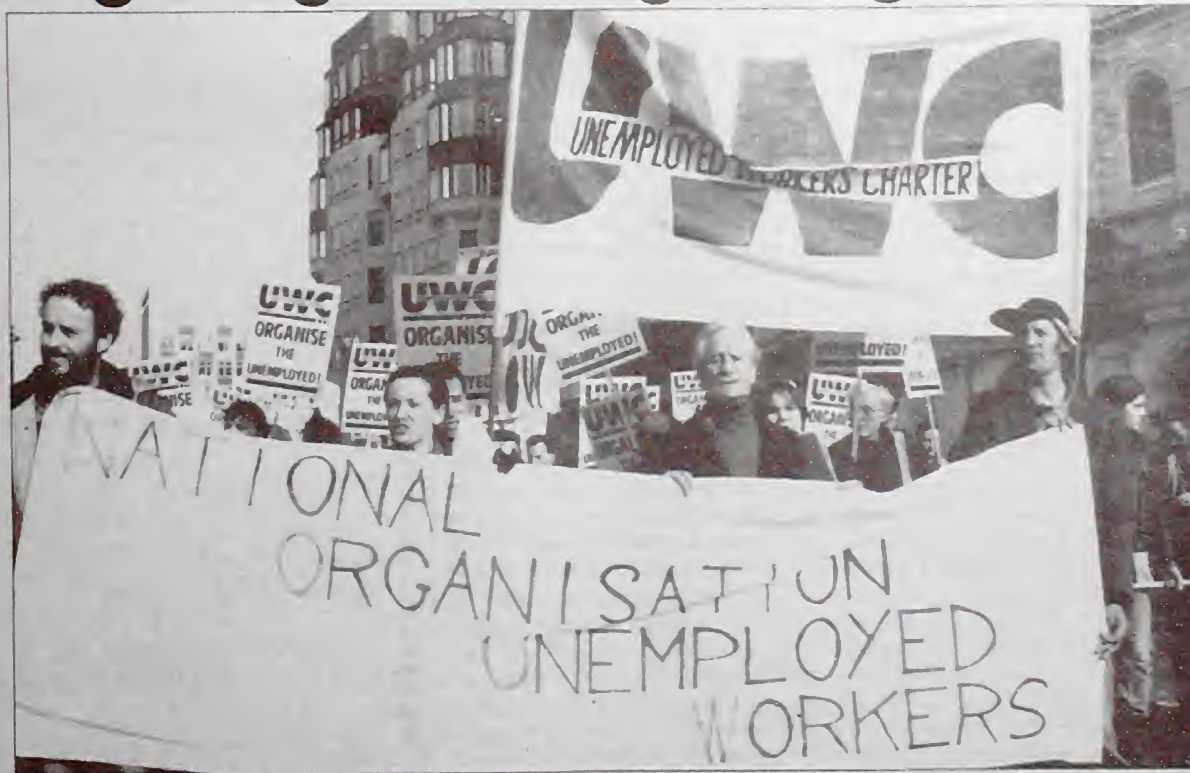
**A**ROUND TWO hundred workers, employed and unemployed, marched through the streets of central London on Saturday February 29, demanding an end to unemployment and homelessness.

The militant demonstration, initiated by the campaigning group for the unemployed, the Unemployed Workers Charter, made an uncompromising stand against the government's vicious attacks on the rights of those out of work and called for the immediate housing of the homeless. It also served to highlight the situation of many employed workers, for instance the forcing down of working conditions, the continual erosion of pay levels, to name but a few.

At the rally in Trafalgar Square many speakers, ranging from Tony Benn to representatives from claimants unions; from leaders of homeless rights campaigns to trade union branches, condemned the government's attacks and illustrating the need for grass roots based resistance with examples from their own struggles.

Lee-Anne Bates, spokesperson for the UWC produced an aggressive and hard hitting offensive on the Tories' record on unemployment over the past decade and highlighted the need for employed and unemployed workers to take immediate action to defeat such assaults: "The time is long overdue for unemployment to be placed at the very top of the political agenda. The Tories have been allowed to get away with inflicting attack after attack on this voiceless section of the working class for too long. We have been pushed around, misrepresented, patronised and blamed for our plight. This demonstration illus-

## Signing on - fighting back!



trates that we are beginning to find our voice and waking up to the potential power that could be ours!"

This is the militant voice of a campaign which will not let the unemployed be used as election fodder for Labour, or as 'walk on, walk off' players by liberal charity mongers. It is a strident call for action by our class to meet head on the bosses' erosion of our rights.

Anne Murphy, the Provisional

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain's prospective parliamentary candidate in Brent East, speaking directly after Benn, delivered a statement from the PCC. She highlighted how the true figures for those out of work were around 4 million as opposed to the 'official' two and a half million. Comrade Murphy also stated that workers should have no illusions in the Labour Party ending unemployment and the misery it bestows upon

millions of workers. "What would be the point of replacing the Tories with a government that inflicted exactly the same attacks on us as Major and his friends? The unemployed must raise demands for what they need to lead decent lives, irrespective of what government is in power and irrespective of what we are told the capitalist system can afford. We have to organise now a genuine effective resistance against whoever wins the general

election."

The Labour Party promises investing in Britain by "increasing the manufacturing base" which, during the "lifetime of a Labour government," will apparently reduce unemployment by a non-specified amount. The promises to implement full employment or even reduce it substantially have now long gone as the Labour Party realises that such a position would be a non-starter in the crisis-torn capitalist economy.

In contrast, and as comrade Murphy pointed out, communists are not relying on the 'health' of the economy in order to eradicate unemployment. We are committed to permanently ending unemployment and homelessness. The capitalist system is the system that breeds unemployment.

Some will downplay this demo, arguing that few hundred make no difference. But the fact that it happened at all, in the teeth of the opposition of the trade union bureaucracy, is important. When the left is arguing that we should batten down the hatches and don't rock the boat for Labour before the election, the fact that a demonstration that puts the needs of the working class first is both a political and organisational step forward for our class. This action has created a base that can and will be built on. Sceptics beware!

A little over 60 years ago, unemployed workers tore up the railings of Hyde Park and fought the police to a standstill in the struggle for their rights then. Just down the road from this, on the last Saturday in February, 1992, communists, employed and unemployed militants, were laying the basis for a movement that will tear up the capitalist system.

Gareth Phillips